



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Education and Early  
Development**

DIVISION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT

Dr. Susan McCauley, Director  
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200  
P.O. Box 110500  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500  
Main: 907.465.2830  
Fax: 907.465.6760  
susan.mccauley@alaska.gov

**To:** Superintendents, Special Education Directors, and District Test Coordinators

**From:** Susan McCauley, Director of Teaching & Learning Support

**Date:** January 30, 2015

**Subject:** Accommodations for Assessments

The Alaska State Board of Education adopted the revised Participation Guidelines in December, 2014. This document provides detailed information regarding the selection and administration of accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English learners on statewide, standardized assessments. There are substantial changes in the Participation Guidelines including updated information on permitted accommodations for the new assessments being implemented in Alaska in 2014 – 2015: Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP); Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM); and College & Career Ready Assessments (CCRA).

Of particular importance are changes relevant to the new standards-based summative assessment, AMP, a computer-based assessment for grades 3-10. It includes three types of embedded student support tools:

1. Universal Tools – These are tools available to all students.
2. Accessibility Tools – These are tools available to students with a documented need. This documentation may be an intervention plan, scores from other assessments, or a more formal plan like an IEP.
3. Accommodations – These tools are available only to students with an IEP, 504 plan, Transitory Impairment, or English Learner Plan. More information on the specific types of tools is found in the Participation Guidelines.

IEPs, 504 plans, and English Learner Plans written prior to the adoption of the new Participation Guidelines may include accommodations based on the needs of the student for a paper/pencil standardized assessment. Some of these accommodations may no longer be necessary. For example, students who received small group testing solely because of the need for a read aloud accommodation on a paper/pencil assessment are now able to test with their peers with the use of the embedded text-to-speech tool available on the computer-based assessment. Additionally, some accommodations used on the previous Standards Based Assessments (SBAs) may not be allowed on the AMP assessment. For example, the use of calculators is not an allowable accommodation for the AMP math assessment in grades 3 – 5, nor for the last section of the AMP math assessment in grades 6 – 10. The State Special

Education Handbook and model [IEP form](#) have been revised to assist districts with documenting AMP allowed accommodations. The State [Special Education Handbook](#) and model forms are available online at: <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/sped/>

Further guidance for educators on accommodations use is found in both the Participation Guidelines and the Handbook for the Participation Guidelines. Prior to the spring administration of AMP, educators should review IEPs and EL plans and the revised Participation Guidelines to determine what is needed to prepare students. The Participation Guidelines will provide clear guidance to classroom teachers and test administrators.

If elements of the student's IEP are not clear based on the changes in the Participation Guidelines, an IEP amendment may be in order. Not following the AMP allowed accommodations may result in an invalidated test. It is recommended that students are given time to practice using alternative accommodations if a support that they are used to receiving is not allowed (or replaced with a variation) on AMP.

If not clearly identified in the student's IEP, be sure that accommodations procedures for AMP are followed. If an accommodation is provided to students that changes what the test is measuring (such as providing a calculator) this is considered a modification and the assessment will be invalidated. If an IEP team chooses to provide a non-allowed accommodation, be sure to notify the parents and student of the consequence of this decision. Additionally, if a test is invalidated the student will not be counted as participating in the assessment.

For further information or clarification concerning implications of the new assessments for IEP development or revisions, please contact Don Enoch, Special Education Administrator, at (907) 465-2972. For further information or clarification specific to the support tools available with the new assessments, please contact Elizabeth Davis, Assessments Administrator, at (907) 465-8431. The Participation Guidelines and the Participation Guideline Handbook are attached to this email and available under the Assessments star on the EED website <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/>. Hardcopies of the Participation Guidelines will be mailed to schools and school districts next week.